

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 EB-08 /053 W
-----121755 010455Z /21

R 280951Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0223
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEBR, SN, CE

SUBJ: SINGAPORE'S PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW VISITS SRI
LANKA APRIL 15-20

1. SUMMARY: SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW SPENT FIVE DAYS IN SRI LANKA TALKING BUSINESS AND RELAXING. IT WAS NOT A STATE VISIT. THERE WAS LITTLE FORMALITY AND NO JOINT COMMUNIQUE. VISIT WAS GIVEN WIDE AND FAVORABLE COVERAGE BY LOCAL PRESS WHICH FOCUSED ON LEE, ON SINGAPORE'S ECONOMIC SUCCESS STORY, AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SRI LANKA. THERE WERE ALSO DISCUSSIONS ON ISARMAMENT, THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, ASEAN, AND THE INDIAN OCEAN. LEE AND PARTY OF TEN ARRIVED NIGHT OF APRIL 15. AFTER BRIEF MEETING WITH MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS FOLLOWING MORNING, LEE WENT TO MOUNTAIN RESORT OF NUWARA ELIYA WHERE HE PLAYED GOLF, PARTICIPATED IN CEREMONIAL AFFAIRS, AND MET INFORMALLY WITH SRI LANKA'S PRESIDENT, J.R. JAYEWARDENE. END SUMMARY.

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2. BILATERAL SUBJECTS
LEE'S TEAM MET FOR 45 MINUTES WITH THE MINISTER OF FINANCE RONNIE DE MEL. ALTHOUGH PRESS INITIALLY REPORTED AGREEMENT ON AN ECONOMIC PACT, GOVERNMENT ISSUED DENIAL. A SRI LANKA MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) OFFICIAL WHO ATTENDED MEETING DESCRIBED IT AS INFORMATIONAL, DEALING MAINLY WITH EXCHANGE OF DATA ON TAXES, INVESTMENT GUARANTEES, AND EX-

CHANGE RATES.

3. IN THREE HOUR MEETING, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS A.C.S. HAMEED AND SINGAPORE TEAM DISCUSSED BROAD RANGE OF SUBJECTS. MFA BRIEFED PRESS ON MEETING, AND MFA OFFICIAL VERIFIED THAT PRESS REPORTS WERE ACCURATE. SINGAPORE AGREED TO SEND A TEAM OF BUSINESSMEN TO SRI LANKA TO STUDY INDUSTRIAL, COMMERICAL, AND BANKING FACILITIES. BOTH SIDES REAFFIRMED EARLIER DECISIONS TO ESTABLISH DEIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN RESPECTIVE CAPITALS. THERE WAS ALSO TALK OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION. PRESS SPECULATED THAT GOVERNMENT OF SINGAPORE, WHERE INDUSTRIAL GROWTH HAS REACHED SATURATION POINT, WILL ENCOURAGE PRIVATE SECTOR ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND JOINT VENTURES IN SRI LANKA TO EXPLOIT SRI LANKA'S GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY TO GULF STATES. HOWEVER, AS INDICATED BY THEIR STATEMENTS ON SRI LANKA'S PROPOSED FREE TRADE ZONE (FTZ), SINGAPOREANS WERE PROBABLY CAUTIOUS AND MADE NO COMMITMENTS. ON THE FTZ, THEY HOPED THAT AFTER FIRST SITES READY BY JANUARY 1979 TO SEND TEAM OF POTENTIAL INVESTORS. SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT WILL ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT AND IF ONE OR TWO INVESTMENTS ARE GOING WITHIN 12 TO 18 MONTHS AFTER SITES ARE READY, THERE MIGHT BE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER INVESTMENT.

4. FOREIGN POLICY DISCUSSIONS

SINGAPOREANS AND SRI LANKANS ALSO DISCUSSED SEVERAL POLITICAL SUBJECTS. ON SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT (SSOD), SINGAPORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SAID IT HAS NO INTEREST IN DISARMAMENT TALKS CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS BECAUSE DISARMAMENT IS A MATTER THAT CONCERNS EUROPEANS AND NOT ASIANS AS SUCH. SINGAPORE FAVORS A ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM, AND NEUTRALITY IN THE AREA BORDERING SINGAPORE; THE SOUTH CHINA SEA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN. IT SUPPORTS A BALANCE OF POWER SO THAT NO SINGLE POWER COULD BE INHIBITIVE OR OPPRESSIVE TO CINTIGUOUS COUNTRIES.

5. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH LEE, PRESIDENT REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED INTEREST IN ASEAN ACTIVITIES BUT GAVE NO INDICATIONS OF WANTING TO JOIN. LEE SAID HE WOULD FAVOR EXPANSION OF ASEAN AND REFERRED TO ASEAN DECLARATIONS INVITING LIKE-MINDED COUNTRIES IN REGION TO CONSIDER ASSOCIATION WITH ASEAN.

6. MOST SIGNIFICANT FOREIGN POLICY STATEMENTS WERE ON NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM). REPORT ON FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING REFERRED TO SHARED CONCERN OVER INCREASING RATE OF DIFFERENCES OF OPINION AND DIVISIONS WITHIN NAM. MINISTERS WERE CONVINCED THAT NAM COULD NOW PLAY A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE AND THERE WAS SUGGESTIONS THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES OF MAKING PROVISIONS TO SETTLE DISPUTES AMONG MEMBERSHIP. MFA SOURCE SAID THAT POSSIBILITY OF NAM SETTLING

DISPUTES AMONG MEMBERSHIP REFLECTS VIEWS FOREIGN MINISTER
HAMEED HAS PRIVATELY EXPRESSED.

7. COMMENT

WHILE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE SOME INTEREST IN HELPING
SRI LANKA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THEY APPARENTLY DID NOT
MAKE ANY FAR REACHING DECISIONS TO DO SO DURING THIS VISIT.
HOWEVER, FROM SRI LANKA'S VIEWPOINT, THE VISIT WAS A PUBLIC
RELATIONS SUCCESS. SRI LANKA IS OBVIOUSLY ENTHRALLED BY
SINGAPORE'S ECONOMIC MIRACLE. GSL STAGE MANAGED VISIT AND
PUBLICITY SO THAT ONLY SINGAPORE'S GOOD POINTS WERE PLACED
BEFORE THE PUBLIC TO BE ADMIRERD ALONG WITH THE SUGGESTION
THAT WITH HARD WORK, SRI LANKA COULD ALSO MAKE IT.

WRIGGINS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HEAD OF GOVERNMENT VISITS, TRAVEL REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978COLOMB01996
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780185-0256
Format: TEL
From: COLOMBO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978046/aaaaaesd.tel
Line Count: 136
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7c6ea1b0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2977833
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SINGAPORE'S PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW VISITS SRI LANKA APRIL 15-20
TAGS: PEPR, OVIP, SN, CE, (LEE KUAN YEW)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7c6ea1b0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014